

We are Community Development

By Danny J. Quick, P.E., Community Development Director/County Engineer

This past July, a departmental consolidation was completed to combine the engineering division from public works with the growth management and building construction services department. This action resulted in the formation of a new department now known as community development.

What's unique about community development is that the department name actually defines major departmental goals and objectives which include assisting, implementing, and facilitating community development via the county's comprehensive plan, management of codes and ordinances and the capital improvement program (CIP).

The community development department is responsible for all construction permitting, inspections, and approvals—both private and public projects. This includes a range of administrative duties from single-family residential construction to capital improvement projects which include all county road, bridge and drainage infrastructure. Also included are county road and canal right-of-way permitting and inspections, and excavation permitting and inspections pursuant to the county excavation ordinance. The department is also in charge of contractor licensing and administers the local contractor licensing program.

Other responsibilities include building code and county zoning code compliance and enforcement, pertaining to both residential and commercial activity pursuant to federal, state and local statutes. Our staff conducts site development plan reviews to ensure construction meets applicable life, safety, and welfare codes prior to construction, and the planning and zoning division coordinates with community groups, developers, and citizens to maintain or enhance existing situations or conditions for the benefit of current and future residents in conjunction with state, federal and local statutes and requirements.

Planning, engineering, and administration of all county transportation, canal dredging, and stormwater improvements are tasked to the community development department. The maintenance and operations of state and county traffic signals and street lights, as well as county Automated Traffic Maintenance System (ATMS) are assigned to the department as well.

The community development department is also responsible for county bridge rehabilitation and replacements, the county-wide road resurfacing program, county roadway signing and marking, and traffic studies and monitoring. The department's range extends widely, to coastal projects including Stump Pass dredging and beach renourishment and to administration and implementation of the Green Building Program in accordance with Ordinance 2009-020.

Many county employed professional engineers, architects, professional planners, state certified code inspectors, construction inspectors, plans examiners and project managers have merged into a single department thus, affording the opportunity to utilize each other's training, talent, skills, knowledge and abilities to better serve the citizens of Charlotte County. A major goal is

that all of the department's technical staff working together as a team will result in saving county taxpayers time and money as it relates to all construction—both private sector and public sector work within the community.

As we work together, there are several immediate departmental objectives being worked on. Staff is finalizing a complete re-write and update of county Land Development Regulations (LDR) in order to fully implement the County's recently adopted and award-winning Smart Charlotte 2050 Comprehensive Plan. Staff is continuing to review and revise county permits, processes, and requirements to eliminate redundancies and non-essential permits—thus eliminating costs and reducing both associated staff time as well as the citizen's time. The department is working closely with the Economic Development Office to help facilitate bringing new businesses to Charlotte County, including the development of Murdock Village. Implementing the county's roadway and stormwater management capital improvements program is another priority, as well as furthering the county's Parkside community redevelopment area initiative as funding opportunities allow.

A more efficient and effective operation with respect to all community development department tasks can be expected with the consolidation of these departments. Use of county staff, available resources, interdepartmental coordination and communications will be like never before.